



Al-Risala 1991

August

4 August 1991

Turning Point

Maulana Syed Amir Ali (1858-1921) was born at Malihabad and died at Lucknow. Forced by adverse circumstances to discontinue his education after middle school, he sought a job, and was employed as a Post Master at a sub-post office in Baharaich. He then acquired a working knowledge of the English language which was necessary for the position he held.

Brought up in a religious family, he offered his prayers punctually. One Friday, when he had gone to the mosque to perform his prayers, a government official came to inspect the post office. He was enraged to find the Post Master missing. When someone went to inform Syed Amir Ali, he was performing his ablutions. He kept his calm, returned unperturbed to the post office, but only after having said his prayers. When the officer asked him for his explanation, he remained silent and did not offer any excuse. Then, picking up a sheet of paper, he wrote his resignation, handed it over to the officer and went home.

Till that day Syed Amir Ali was conversant only with Urdu and English. He knew neither Arabic nor Persian. However, the resignation had given him a jolt. It set him thinking: "I have almost no direct knowledge of the religion for which I have tendered my resignation. And that I will not be able to answer any questions put to me about it." He was not very familiar either with the Qur'an or the Hadith.

Suddenly, he was fired by a new zeal. He was determined to learn Arabic and Persian. He went on to achieve such mastery of the Arabic language that he came to be considered an expert. He was appointed as a teacher of Hadith at Darul Ulum Nadwah (Lucknow). Later he became the Head of the Madarsa Alia, Calcutta. His translated works from Arabic language were published by the well-known publisher, Munshi Nawal Kishore (d. 1895). Some of these are: *Sahih Bukhari*, *Fatawa-e-Alamgiri*, etc. (*Qaumi Awaz*, 4 Feb., 1990). If a man has 'life' in him, even a small incident will give him the impetus to perform magnificently. But a man without 'life' will respond in a lackadaisical manner, even in the face of events of great consequence. His reaction will be that of a man who neither sees nor learns, even from the major 'events' in his life.

5 August 1991

The Words of the Prophet

A wise man has said that having a collection of Hadiths in the house enables one to 'listen' to the very words of the Prophet as he uttered them. This apparently simple statement is indeed very profound.

At the present time, besides the collections of the sayings of the Prophet of Islam, we also have those of other Prophets, such as are recorded in the Bible and the Torah. Yet there is a difference, for it cannot be said that having the Bible or the Torah in the house enables one to 'listen' to the words of their prophets, which is literally true in the case of the Prophet of Islam.

The difference arises mainly from the fact that the sayings of the Prophets of the other faiths are no longer considered authentic beyond any shadow of a doubt. Many changes have occurred in them due to alterations, distortions and erroneous, reproductions. If we were to take these books at their face value, then it could certainly be claimed that they contained the actual sayings of their Prophets, but, the truth is that, because they are no longer in their original form, they cannot have the fullest measure of our trust.

The case of the Prophet of Islam is very different. Great care and tireless effort have gone into the collection and preservation of the sayings of the Prophet. Every possible precaution has been 'taken' in the recording of the Hadith not to adulterate its purity. It can be said, therefore, with certainty, that these indeed are the sayings of the Prophet. And it is through these sayings that the Prophet lives amongst us, giving us his message and his guidance, and bearing the torch to light our path.

But if one is to receive the Prophet's message, one has to have the ear for it. Otherwise, one can never hear his words. One will remain as ignorant as those who never paid heed to the teachings of the Prophet even during his lifetime. No one could be more unfortunate than a man who possesses the collection of the Hadith, yet is unable to benefit from it, because he has no ear for the words of the Prophet.

6 August 1991

Rating

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* devotes just a few lines to its description of Umar ibn al-Chattel, the second Caliph of Islam. But Dr. Michael Hart, in his famous book, *The 100*, in which he presents his selection of the 100 greatest personalities from the whole of human history, accords Umar ibn al-Chattel the 51st position.

This would lead one to conclude that historians sometimes do not do justice to the truly great figures of history, and that there may also be occasions when undeserving personalities have their merits blown up out of all proportion.

An excerpt from Dr. Michael Harts' conclusion of Umar ibn al-Chattel is quoted below:

Omar's achievements are impressive indeed ... It may occasion some surprise that Umar – a figure virtually unknown in the west – has been ranked higher than such famous men as Charlemagne and Julius Caesar. However, the conquests made by the Arabs under Omar's brilliant leadership, taking into account both their size and their duration, are substantially more important than those of either Caesar or Charlemagne. (p. 257)

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* has not cited Umar Baroques being a particularly noteworthy figure of his times, yet Dr. Michael Hart has ranked him 51st out of the greatest personalities of the world. And in so far as the history of Islam is concerned, he ranks third in importance.

How many of God's servants in this world have similarly been relegated to a position which is not worthy of mention' by their fellow beings! But this state of affairs will be set right in the world hereafter. There everyone will find the place he deserves by virtue of his actions rather than by virtue of the words he spoke, or of the words spoken about him.

7 August 1991

Piety and Ethics

The Prophet was once asked what it was that would count more than anything in taking people to paradise. He replied: Fear of God and good moral character. (Tirmizi)

Man is God's servant. But besides this, he has to live in this world with other human beings as such, man must give himself at one and the same time, to two kinds of relationship: one, with God, and the other with humans. From this standpoint, the trial of man has two sides to it. And man has to pass the test on both of these sides.

What is required of man in his relation to God is that he accept God as his Creator and Master. He thus becomes immersed in God's greatness. It is this type of faith which produces the particular emotions and feelings (born of love and fear of God) which taken together, are called piety.

God is great; man is small; God is omnipotent, man is humble. God is the Giver, man the receiver. The keen awareness of these facts induces in man a sense of gratefulness, humility and accountability. The arrogance within him disappears. He starts leading a life governed by a feeling of intense love for God, as well as an extreme dread of Him.

When such a God-oriented person has contacts with other human beings, he becomes the epitome of good behaviour in his dealings with them. His words are the words of a humble person. His actions are governed by a sense of justice. He starts leading his life as if he were seeing God before him, guiding his actions; he starts thinking of God as the One to whom he will be accountable for all his deeds. The behaviour of such a man, according to the Islamic standard, would be described as virtuous.

It is the man who passes both these tests who will finally inhabit the eternal Gardens of Paradise.

7 August 1991

Three things which must remain inviolate

"A Muslim's honour, property and blood: no Muslim should violate these things."

(Hadith)

The Power of Usefulness

As far back as July of last year, Mr. Bhaban Sen Gupta, a resident correspondent of the *Hindustan Times* in Moscow published detailed report on the USSR entitled, 'A New USSR is emerging.' (July 20, 1990). Mentioning the changes taking place in the USSR, he concludes:

"An outstanding Soviet specialist in international affairs told me that the United States would not be the first love of the U.S.S.R. 'The first love will be united Europe. And then Japan, the U.S. and Canada.' What about India?' I asked with a mixture of surprise and amusement. 'India is special' the academician placidly replied. 'India is not our first, or second, or third love. It is our love-for-ever,' (p. 1).

For the last forty years, our government has been making every effort to convince us that the USSR is our greatest friend. But the Russian specialist's polite side-stepping of the issue shows that the USSR has placed its relationship with India in a purely formal category. The reason for this change of attitude is very simple. First the USSR needed us. Now it no longer needs us. In the politics of cold war, Russia used India to counter the USA. Now, after the peace treaty between the two countries, the politics of confrontation have come to an end, and, with that, India too has lost its importance in the eyes of the USSR. Now, to the USSR, only those countries matter which can help it in its economic development by providing it with modern technology. In that field, it is Europe and Japan-not India-which can produce this technology.

The secret of being important, whether to an individual or to a community, lies in the ability to fulfill others' needs. Any other basis besides this is unrealistic and artificial and will collapse with the first puff of wind.

The Hindustan Times of December 28, 1990, has published another report by Mr. N.C. Menon, Indian journalist residing in Washington, in which he 'writes: It is not generally known that when Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev visited India, the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, had suggested closer cooperation between India, China and the Soviet Union as a friendly counterpoise to the US giant (and perhaps to the emerging European conglomerate). President Gorbachev responded with brutal frankness that what they desperately needed was new technology, and neither China nor India could give them that (p. 13).

Over the last forty years, the USSR had come to regard the 'Capitalist West' as its arch enemy and 'Socialist India' as its friend. But, with long experience, it became apparent that it had nothing to gain from India, whereas the 'Capitalist' west could make a significant contribution to its developments. So it

discarded India and began to adopt a friendly stance towards the west, overlooking in the process all the causes for grievance it had formerly held against it.

In this way, the 'capitalist' countries conquered their greatest enemy by dint of sheer usefulness. Whereas Socialist India's inability to offer concrete advantages resulted in the loss of its greatest friend.

This is the real secret of success in the modern world. It is purely and simply a matter of usefulness, and is not to be achieved by the erection of great monuments of fine words.

9 August 1991

Avoiding retaliation-for the sake of God

While the Muslims were returning from the Bani Mustalaq campaign, A'ishah was detained by the loss of a necklace. She found the necklace and, losing trace of the Muslim party, went to sleep at the place where they had put up camp the night before. There she was spotted by a Companion. He sat her on his camel and, himself holding the reins, set off for Medina. When they reached home, the hypocrites used this episode as an opportunity to spread false scandals about A'ishah. One of those engaged in this scandal-mongering was Mistah, a relative of Abu Bakr, who received a monthly stipend from his comparatively wealthy kinsman. When Abu Bakr discovered Mistah's role in the slander against his daughter A'ishah, he swore an oath that he would not give Mistah any money in future. Then this verse of the Quran was revealed: "Let not the honourable and rich among you swear not to give to their kindred, the poor, and those who have emigrated for the cause of God. Rather, let them pardon and forgive Do you not wish God to forgive you? He is Forgiving, Merciful. (24:22) Surely, I would like God to forgive me," said Abu Bakr, on hearing of the revelation of this verse.

(Seerat ibn Hisham)

10 August 1991

An Unconquerable Force

Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) lived for some time in Spain, but in 1400, when, Timur, along with other barbaric Tartar tribes, besieged Damascus, Ibn Khaldun was present in the City. During the siege, negotiations took place between Timur and the people of Damascus. At that juncture Timur expressed his desire to see Ibn Khaldun, who had, by that time, earned a reputation as a historian. The people of Damascus understood from this that Timur wanted a truce. Ibn Khaldun was thereupon lowered over the city wall by ropes and spent some seven weeks in the Tartar camp, of which he has given a detailed description in his autobiography. Timur treated him with respect, and also arranged for his safe return to Egypt, as he very much desired.

However, the incentive to do honour to Ibn Khaldun lay in Timur's own interests. As the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says, "Probably dreaming of further conquests, Timur asked for a detailed description of North Africa and got not only a short lecture on that subject, but also an extensive written report." (9/149)

Although Timur was so cruel to the people of Damascus that in spite of their offer to negotiate, he sacked the city and burned the great mosque of Damascus, he accorded full honour to Ibn Khaldun. The reason was that, due to the latter's distinctive geographical and historical knowledge, he had proved that he could be a useful guide to Timur.

If man can prove his usefulness, he becomes honourable in the eyes of the world, even in the eyes of a deadly enemy. The kind of usefulness which offers advantages to others is something which can tame even ferocious, blood thirsty people; it can even bring a king to bow to a common man.

10 August 1991

One does not lose by giving.

Abu Hurayrah reports this saying of the Prophet "Charity does not decrease anyone's wealth while forgiveness only increases a man's honour; God raises up one who abases himself before his Lord."

(Muslim, *Sahih*)

The Succour of God

In the sixth year of Hijrah a 10 year peace treaty was concluded at Hudaybiyyah, one article of which specified that any person emigrating to Muhammad's camp without permission of his guardian would have to be returned to Mecca; whereas any Muslim emigrating from Muhammad's camp to Mecca would not have to be returned. When the details of the treaty were about to be finalised, Suhayl ibn Amr was delegate of the Quraysh. The treaty was still being written when Suhayl ibn Amr's son, Abu Jandal arrived. He had accepted Islam, but the Meccans had imprisoned him. He had walked all the way in chains from Mecca to Hudaybiyyah (present Shamisi) 13 miles distance, in a state that when he reached the camp his feet were still shackled and his body showed the bruises and injuries of beating and assault. He pleaded pathetically with the Muslims to save him from the fate of being returned and imprisoned again by the unbelievers who would continue to persecute him for his faith. The sight of the horrible suffering of their Muslim brother greatly increased the Muslims' resentment and their dissatisfaction with the pact. But Suhayl ibn Amr, Abu Jandal's father, said although the writing of the pact had not yet been concluded the conditions had already been decided amongst them.

"Therefore Abu Jandal must be surrendered to us. The Prophet accepted his argument and handed over Abu Jandal to him. The Prophet spoke to Abu Jandal thus: O Abu Jandal, have patience and be disciplined, for God will soon show you and your other persecuted colleagues a way out of your suffering. We have entered into a peace treaty With the Quraysh and the other." Abu Jandal returned to the Quraysh in compliance with the demands of this treaty, and returned to Mecca weeping. Similarly, other Muslims like Abu Baseer, who had managed to free themselves, from the imprisonment of the Quraysh and had come to Medina went on being returned to the Quraysh according to the pact.

But, on the other hand, in the matter of Muslim women this principle was not adhered to. This verse was revealed in the Quran on this occasion:

Believers, when believing women seek refuge with you, test them. Allah best knows their faith. If you find them true believers do not return them to the infidels. (60:10)

In this connection such incidents are recorded as when Umm Kulthum bint Uqbah bin Abi Muyat freed herself from the clutches of the Quraysh and came to Medina, the Quraysh demanded her return according to the terms of the pact. Two brothers of Umm Kulthum, Walid ibn Uqbah and Ammara ibn Uqbah, came to Medina to take her back. In spite of this she was not returned. Apparently this was a violation of the pact. And the Quraysh had found a great opportunity to defame the Prophet on this score. But the Quraysh, in spite of being dire enemies, had fallen silent on this issue. They did not even protest against it.

How did this come about? We do not find any satisfactory reply in the books of Seerah and commentaries on the Quran. Qazi Abu Bakr Ibn Arabi writes that the Quraysh became quiet, and stopped making protests because God had miraculously silenced their tongues. There is no doubt about it that it was a miracle of God. But not in the sense in which the word miracle is normally used.

We can arrive at the truth by perusing the wording of this particular 'condition of the pact. Here we quote the version of Bukhari which may be taken to be the most authentic: "You will have to return any of our men who come to you even if they have accepted your faith."

So we can understand that the word 'any of our men' (*rajul*) gave Muslims the opportunity of excluding women from the application of this condition.

This condition of the treaty had not been put forward by the Muslims, but was included by the Meccans and Suhayl, the delegate of the Quraysh had dictated the actual wording. It seems that while dictating the word *rajul*, Suhayl had in mind a word meaning "any person" which referred to both men and women, but while putting this conception into words he uttered the word *rajul*, which is used in Arabic only for men. Most probably this was the reason the Prophet could legitimately refuse, (according to the narration of Imam Zuhri) to hand over Umm Kulthum bint Uqbah to her brother when he came to the Prophet and demanded her return. The Prophet said on this occasion 'The condition applied to men and not to women (Tafsir Razi). It seems that before this incident took place, the Quraysh themselves erroneously understood this article of the treaty to apply to both male and female emigrants. But after the Prophet had pointed out to them that the article specified 'man' they conceded the weakness of their stand. Thus God, by means of one word, saved Muslim women from being humiliatingly returned to their oppressors.

13 August 1991

Doing One's Duty

Zille Abbas Abbasi, a journalist who has worked for many newspapers, is now working for the *Milap*, Delhi. I had not met him, since 1982. Then last August I came across him again and he narrated his experiences to me. I felt they had a good lesson in them.

When Zille Abbas joined the *Milap*, a problem arose about the Friday prayer. He went to the 58-year old manager, Prem Nath Chopra, and explained to him that he wished to attend the Friday prayer, and that he would work extra hours to compensate for the lost time. Mr. Chopra gave him permission without a second thought.

Zille Abbas proved true to his word. Every Friday he went for his prayer and compensated for it by doing extra hours of work.

The arrangement worked well, and then came the time for Ramazan. A few days before Ramazan started, Mr. Chopra came to Zille Abbas's cabin and said, "Ramazan is about to start and I know you keep your fast. You should adjust your working hours in such a way that you are not subjected to any inconvenience. You have full freedom to come and go as you like. The normal office hours are not applicable to you during the month of Ramazan."

Just as saying our prayers is a duty, doing our job earnestly is also a duty. If the *namazis* realise this fact and perform both the duties with devotion, it will earn them rich dividends. On the one hand, it will enrich their spiritual awakening, bringing them close to God. While on the other, it will create in them such social qualities as will endear them to all those with whom they associate.

Islam: Creator of the Modern Age

Physical Sciences

Arnold Toynbee tells us that science is another name for the exploitation of nature. He then raises the question as to why man took so long to control and exploit it when it had existed in our world for millions of years. He himself gives us the answer:

"For ancient man nature was not just a treasure trove of 'natural resources', but a goddess, 'Mother Earth'. And the vegetation that sprang from the earth, the animals that roamed the earth's surface, and the minerals hiding in the earth's bowels, all partook of nature's divinity. So did all natural phenomena – springs and rivers and the sea; mountains; earthquakes and lightning and thunder. Such was the original religion of all mankind."

When nature is regarded as an object of worship, it cannot, at the same time, be looked at as an object of exploitation, investigation and conquest. Referring to the historical fact mentioned above, Toynbee acknowledges that the age in which nature was sacrosanct was only brought to an end with the advent of monotheism. The concept of monotheism brought nature down from being a deity set upon a high pedestal to being just another part of God's creation. Now, instead of the phenomena of nature being held as objects of worship, they came to be held as objects of subjugation and conquest.

This concept of monotheism had been propounded by all the Prophets in the past. However, it remained at the level of pronouncement on an individual level; it could not reach the stage of general revolution. The movement based on monotheism finally reached the stage of revolutions only through the struggle of the Prophet' and his companions. After this, the tendency to regard nature as holy decreased to the point where it no longer existed as such; this was a necessary outcome of such a revolution. Now man started looking at nature with a view to exploring and exploiting it. This process developed in a positive way over the centuries, sometimes slowing, sometimes accelerating, but finally ushering in our modern scientific age.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states in its article 'History of Physical Sciences', that Greek science fell into jeopardy after the second century A.D., because the Romans were not interested in it., "Social pressures, political persecution, and the anti-intellectual bias of the church Fathers drove the few remaining Greek scientists and philosophers to the East. There they ultimately found a welcome when the rise of Islam in the 7th century stimulated interest in scientific and philosophic subject. Most of the important Greek scientific texts were preserved in Arabic translations. Although the Arabs did not alter the foundations of Greek science, they made several important contributions within its general framework. When the interest in Greek learning revived in Western Europe during the 12th and 13th centuries, scholars turned to Islamic Spain for the scientific texts. A spate of translations (from Arabic

into Latin) resulted in the revival of science in the west ... scientists of the Middle Ages reached high levels of sophistication and prepared the ground for the scientific revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries." (14/385)

Mauseleban asserts in his book, *Arab Civilization*, that Arab science reached Europe not through crusades, but by way of Andalusia, Sicily and Italy. In 1130, an institute for translation was established under the patronage of Remand of Taletala, through which famous books were rendered into Latin from Arabic. Through these translations, a whole new world was opened up to Europe. This work of translation continued right up to the 14th century. Not only the works of Razes, Avicena and Averroes, but also those of Galen, Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Ptolemy, etc. were translated from Arabic into Latin. Dr. Guilkirk, in his book on the history of this period, mentions more than three hundred books translated from Arabic into Latin.

Other Western scholars have even more openly acknowledged this as a historical fact. Robert Briffault, for example, has written that the Greeks produced system, generalized it, formulated it, but that it was alien to their temperament to go into the labour of observation and experimental research. What came to be called science was the result of a new method of experiment, observation and calculation. And this was transmitted to Europe through the Arabs. Modern science is, indeed, the greatest legacy of the Islamic civilization.

Summing up the position, Briffault writes: "The debt of our science to that of the Arabs does not consist in startling discoveries of revolutionary theories; science owes a great deal more to Arab culture: it owes its existence." (*Making of Humanity*, p. 190)

George Sarton, the famous chronicler of scientific advances, writes that the most fundamental and most distinctive success lay in fostering the spirit of experiment and observation. And this spirit, originally brought into being by the Muslims, continued to prevail until the twelfth century.

The Gift of Islam

The two most important contributions of Islam in this connection were, firstly, to remove the mental block which was an obstacle to progress, and secondly, to launch the new age of progress on a practical basis.

Removing the mental block meant displacing things from their pedestals of holiness. This task – undoubtedly the most difficult was successfully performed during the period of the Prophet and the pious Caliphs who succeeded him.

Although a practical beginning had been made in the first phase of Islam, its systematic development took place during the Abbasid era with the establishment of Bait-ar-Hikmah in 832. This work gained great momentum during the Arab rule in Spain and Sicily. Finally, it reached Europe, where it gave the first impetus to the industrial revolution.

It is generally accepted that modern progress and its ramifications are related to industrial revolution. In fact, it could be said that all progress has come in its wake. Industrial revolution itself is another name for the exploitation of the hidden resources of the earth. For example, man mined coal and then converted it into energy. He harnessed the power of flowing water and converted that into electricity. He extracted minerals from beneath the earth's surface and transformed them into machines. And this is how the industrial revolution came into existence.

Now, why was it, that when all these resources had been available on the earth since time immemorial, man had not been able to utilize them in order to found a developed civilization prior to the advent of Islam? There is only one answer; polytheism had placed an insurmountable barrier in has path.

What is polytheism? It is the worship of the phenomena of nature. Before the time of the Prophet of Islam, in every period recorded in history, man had worshipped natural phenomena, holding them to be imbued with divinity. All ancient civilizations Greek, Egyptian, Roman and Persian – all were polytheistic in their persuasions. All the outstanding things of this world – earth, rivers, mountains, sun, moon or stars – all were objects of worship for man. Only Islam was able to displace them from the pedestal of worship. Only then could that new intellectual departure be made which is now known as the scientific revolution.

17 August 1991

Trusting in God, not wealth

During the Caliphate of Umar, some revenue arrived from Iraq. Umar began to distribute it, and appeared to be on the point of exhausting it completely when Abd ar Rahman ibn Auf suggested to Umar that he should keep some of it back in order to deal with any enemy attack or calamity that might befall them. At this, Umar was indignant. "Be done with you; you play the devil's advocate. No, by God, for the sake of tomorrow, I will not disobey God today."

17 August 1991

Not even martyrdom cancels out an unpaid debt.

The Prophet, admonishing his followers, told them that the struggle for God's cause, and faith in Him were the greatest of all actions. A man arose and asked, "If I am slain while I am about God's business, will all my sins be forgiven?" The Prophet replied, "If, in the patient pursuance of your purpose, pressing ever onwards, but at the same time seeking God's pleasure, you are slain in His path, your sins will indeed be forgiven." After a pause the man, at the Prophet's request, repeated his question. "Does this mean that if I am slain while I am about God's business, all my sins will be forgiven?" The Prophet gave the same answer to this but added: "But not if you are in debt. That is what I have been told by Gabriel."

(Muslim)

Gulf Diary

I

15 January 1991

Today, as the deadline set by the United Nations for the withdrawal of the Iraqi forces from Kuwait draws near, the newspapers are full of speculations as to the future course of events, for after 11.59 p.m. if there has been no move towards withdrawal, America will have the legal authority to use force to expel the Iraqis from Kuwait. *The Times of India*'s editorial heading, 'Countdown to Zero' certainly expresses the tenseness of the situation. American Major J.J. Coghlan, speaking to American AP news agency correspondents at the U.S. headquarters in Saudi Arabia, remarked that "you can gauge the sense of urgency from the way every body keeps looking at his watch as zero hour approaches." It is from these headquarters that aerial operations are to be launched and controlled until Mr. Saddam Hussain surrenders, or until his country is reduced by aerial bombardment to Stone Age conditions.

Just as the Americans have given an ultimatum to Iraq to withdraw its forces from Kuwait before the 15th of January, 1991, under UN resolution No. 678, God has set a life-span for this world in the course of which man has to reform himself. Then the world will come to an end and everyone will be brought to the court of God to account for his deeds.

If only man were fully alive to God's message, he would live his life with a greater sense of moral urgency. Everyone would practise self-appraisal. Everyone would show proper restraint in his words and deeds. Everyone would conduct his affairs as if he would not live to see another day. People would feel as if they were already standing before their Lord – even before the Day of Judgement was upon them.

16 January 1991

Compared to Kuwait, with its area of 6880 square miles, Iraq, with its area of 168878 square miles is a very large country. Having spent most of its oil revenue to build up a massive military potential, and taking advantage of the fact that Kuwait had virtually no army, President Saddam Hussain of Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait on the 2nd of August, 1990. After annexing it by force, he called it the 19th province of Iraq.

The UN's response was prompt. The Iraqi invasion was condemned by most countries of the world, the USA going to the extent of sending a huge task force to impose sanctions against Iraq. This stopped the outflow of oil, from which 95 per cent of the latter's revenue comes, and sealed off the import of arms, food and other essential supplies. Iraq has no industry or agriculture worth the name. What followed was

rhetoric and invective from the ruler of Iraq, President Saddam Hussain, against the U.S. Rejecting the proposal to negotiate with the U.S.A., he tersely asked, "Is Kuwait the 52nd State of the U. S. A.

This kind of question was aimed at side-tracking the issue. It is obvious that Kuwait is neither the 52nd State of America, nor the 19th province of Iraq. Saddam Hussain was blaming America for what he himself was guilty of.

Such double standards are most prevalent today. But people should realize that only such utterances are acceptable as have true value in the eyes of God. In any case in the life, to come, words will lose all meaning. The true believer is one who sets as little value upon mere words today as they will have in God's divine Court. Faithful is he who accepts most willingly today what he will be forced to accept in the Hereafter. For, by that time, it will be too late.

17 January 1991

The BBC, London announced that the American forces had launched a full-scale attack on the Iraqis at the crack of dawn by Indian Standard Time, the crucial moment arrived at 3.30 am. How strange it seems that something should happen in Iraq in the middle of the night and minutes later the whole world should get instant news of it from a radio news flash from London.

In my short life-span I have been destined to witness two large-scale wars: World War II, led by Great Britain, and the present Gulf War, led by the Americans with the participation of 28 other countries. (The remaining countries are also indirectly involved as this war has the formal approval of the United Nations.)

The Second World War started on the first of September, 1939, when Hitler's Germany invaded Poland. *The Pioneer*, published from Allahabad, broke the news under the heading (as far as I can remember) 'Poland in Germany's Hands.'

This war of destruction carried on for several years. Only after mass destruction of life and property did Hitler's arrogance give way to despair.

'Isolated and reduced to despair, Hitler married his mistress, Eva Braun, on April 30.1945, and committed suicide with her in the ruins of the Chancellery. (19/1011).'

It seems that the Iraqi dictator is trapped in a situation similar to that faced by the German dictator. The Iraqi forces are no match for the Allied Forces. It is like an ant trying to fight an elephant. With such a glaring disparity in military resources, it was more suicidal than courageous on the part of Iraq to become involved in this war.

Iraqi forces are equipped with conventional weapons purchased from the USSR and other western countries, whereas the Americans manufacture their own armaments. A country with acquired arms can hardly be expected to sustain a war and win it against a country which is self-reliant in the matter of weaponry.

18 January 1991

Today's *Hindustan Times* carries an article by Mr. A.K. Ray in which he describes it as 'madness' and 'a stupid misadventure' on the part of Mr. Saddam Hussain to have overrun Kuwait. He goes on to say that the news disseminated about the capabilities of the Iraqi forces are a propaganda ploy and that the Iraqi President shall have to pay a terribly heavy price for his wrongdoings (p. 13).

The writer is absolutely correct. Mr. Saddam Hussain has embarked upon a misadventure which is suicidal; his dreams of becoming an Arab leader show him to be paranoid. It is for the same reason that he attacked Iran in 1980, after abrogating treaty between the two countries. His aim was to control the Shat-el Arab and annex Khozistan in total disregard of the Algiers Treaty of 1957. But the end result was a million lives lost. And a staggering number of people wounded. Iraq's debt rose to 82 billion dollars. At the time of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, every citizen of Iraq was in debt to the tune of \$ 4824.

The war raged for 8 years without Mr. Saddam Hussain having been able to attain his goal, but this did not teach him a lesson. And this time he committed the senseless blunder of challenging a super power – America.

In a strange display of emotions, Muslims the world over are supporting Mr. Saddam Hussain. For most Muslims he has become a hero. This shows how the average Muslim suffers from the same complex as Saddam Hussain. It is nothing but collective egoism which has made them his supporters.

True Islam makes one humble, self-made Islam boosts one's ego to the point of absurdity. This is the greatest weakness of Muslims today. It is a weakness which has driven them far away from reality, making them ready to fall in line behind anyone who mouths bombastic words, regardless of whether or not his words have any meaning in the world of today.

19 January, 1991

A new technique in modern warfare, known as 'pinpoint bombing' was displayed for the first time in the Gulf War. By using this technique, the Allied Forces were able to drop a bomb with great precision on the defence headquarters in Baghdad, despite its being located amidst a cluster of buildings. When they wanted to hit the T. V. antenna, they hit just that, and left the building below it untouched.

A report from London (*Times of India*, January 19, 1991) reads:

At least four of these 4000 air sorties yielded pictures of the sequence of highly accurate attacks that thrilled the military community, heralding a new era in warfare.

It is quite a complicated process to drop a bomb accurately on a target of which the details remain a military secret. However, the principle behind it works something like this. First a satellite takes photographs of the target, which are then fed to a computer. The airborne airplane locates the target

with the help of laser beams. When the 'target matches with the images stored in the computer, the computer activates the release of a bomb which falls on the selected target. The entire operation takes only a few minutes.

It thrills the military processionals to watch the performance of high tech. war machines. But, in truth, it should be God's power which should thrill mankind, for it is He who is behind the endless possibilities we now see stretching out before us, and it is He who made the human mind capable of harnessing and translating these possibilities into present-day marvels. How ironic it is that the marvels that should serve to remind us of our Creator have instead aroused admiration for some ordinary mortal, a fellow human being who has done nothing greater than invent a technology. If man were to draw proper lessons from these events, the world would witness a revolutionary change in the entire future course of human history.

20 January, 1991

Nawa-e-Waqt, a Lahore daily, gave great prominence to a news item (18 January, 1991) which said that the whole of Pakistan stood united in support of Mr. Saddam Hussain against America, The same newspaper published an article entitled, 'America—Enemy No. I' of which the following is an extract:

"President Bush has the distinction of uniting all factions and intelligentsia of Pakistan, who because of him stand together on the same platform, for the first time. The whole nation regards America as the enemy number one of Islam today. This was known all along, but the show of solidarity has taken place for the first time (after America invaded Iraq)."

Muslim newspapers are full of such reports of a 'united Muslim world.' But this union is negative in character. Any such coming together for purely negative reasons cannot produce genuine unity. At best, it is a foregathering of a temporary nature, and, far from being a show of strength, it is rather a sign of a nation's weakness.

In recent times, whenever the Muslims have come together on a large scale, the driving force has been negative. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Muslims of the subcontinent united in the name of the khilafat. This was not a positive movement. It came about because of a general antipathy towards the British. Similarly, during the middle of the century the Muslims stood together under the banner of the Muslim League. This, too, was not a positive move. The reason behind this was animosity towards the Hindus. Now towards the end of this century the Muslims appear to be united. But this unity, likewise, is based on an anti-America feeling. Since there is no positive basis for this move, it, too, will be short-lived.

The present-day Muslim leaders repeatedly whip up a state of euphoria over such a show of solidarity. But flames lit in the evening die a natural death before sun-up. And a community plunged in darkness remains racked with disunity and confusion.

Only positive motivation can herald real unity. Negative impulses do little more than collect a crowd. When unity is fostered only by the raising of awareness and the performance of well thought-out acts, what good does it do just to have massive assemblages of unthinking mobs?

21 January, 1991

Time magazine (15-21 January, 1991) reports in its 'Gulf Special' that both America and Iraq have reached the point of no return. "Both sides, it seems, are ready for war because neither is willing to suffer a supposedly worse fate – the humiliation that capitulation, or its perception, implies." (pp. 9-19).

Time is of the opinion that the best choice for Iraq is to withdraw its focus from Kuwait unconditionally. The Kuwaities themselves have consistently said they are willing to negotiate over Iraq's grievances. Even the international peace conference that Saddam posits as a price for leaving Kuwait has not been ruled out.

According to *Time*, the U.S. has already promised publicly that the anti-Saddam coalition will not attack Iraq if its troops leave Kuwait. Furthermore, President Bush had hinted that Iraq could negotiate its border disputes with Kuwait and perhaps get an international conference on the Palestinian problem convened. (p 12) The Soviet Union and France had reiterated that a package deal to solve the West Asia problem could be worked out under the auspices of the United Nations, in exchange for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. *Time* was hopeful that Israel could be pressurized to give up the West Bank and Gaza, and let the Palestinians who live there form their own state (page 14).

But Mr. Saddam Hussain rejected all the proposals and the war broke out. Any gain is now out of question. In fact in all probability Mr. Saddam Husain is going to lose whatever he already has. Wisdom lies in demanding more but settling for less. It opens up new avenues for progress if whatever the other party offers, is accepted without a clash. On the other hand if the policy of confrontation is followed, it results in the loss of everything that one already possesses.

Whatever was being offered before the war to Mr. Saddam Hussain, will not be available to him after the war although he will then be full of requests. By that time it will be too late.

22 January, 1991

Britain is one of the members of the multinational forces under the American command. The Tornado, a fighter bomber aircraft of the Royal Air Force, has been carrying out raids on Iraqi targets. Some of the Tornado pilots shared their experiences with the AP correspondents.

"Squadron Leader Pablo mason said, 'Whenever we fly a mission to destroy an enemy target, there is always the possibility of getting killed. It is all a matter of seconds!'

According to the *Times of India* (22 Jan. 91) Squadron Leader Mason said:

"There is a constant awareness that in a few seconds time you may not exist." (p. 7)

This awareness which comes about in a pilot during a war should be an integral part of a believer's life. A man of true faith considers this world a place of trial. God gives him life and then keeps a watch over him. The moment his time is up, he will be confronted by the Angel of Death, who will take him away to the Hereafter.

The moment the realization dawns that death may come at any moment, any normal human being will become concerned. He will treat each second of his life as if it were the very last. His thoughts will run more on death than on life. He will worry more about tomorrow than about 'today'. He will endeavour to perform good deeds in this world to earn his reward in the next, for this world-for him-will soon cease to exist. It is only the life hereafter which is eternal.

"In another minute, I may not be here." This feeling lends more importance to the future than to the present. With this thought in mind, a man will concentrate more on what is to come than on what is going on around him. He will give up seeking this world and devote his entire energies to building for the Hereafter.

(To be continued)

25 August 1991

It is in giving that we receive

The Prophet said that the Lord says: "Mankind, spend and you will be spent upon."

(Bukhari and Muslim)

25 August 1991

Fearing God in one's dealings with men

The Prophet once came across Abu Mas'ood Ansari beating his slave. "You should know, Abu Mas'ood," he said, "that God has more power over you than you have over this slave." Abu Mas'ood trembled on hearing these words of the Prophet. "Messenger of God," he said. "I am freeing this slave for God's sake." "If you had not acted thus, the flames of Hell would have engulfed you," the Prophet told him.

(Abu Dawood)

25 August 1991

Putting oneself in others' shoes and not entertaining suspicions

The Prophet's wife, Aishah was once slanderously accused of misconduct. While the rumours were at their height. Abu Ayub Ansari's wife mentioned to her husband what people were saying about Aishah. Abu Ayub refused on principle to believe It and replied that those who said such things were liars "Can you imagine yourself doing such a thing?" he asked his wife "Certainly not." she replied. "Well, how much more chaste and pure Aishah is than you. Why should such actions be attributed unto her?" said Abu Ayub to his wife.